

**NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION
MONITORING AND
IMPROVEMENT PROCESS**

**SAU 68
FINAL REPORT**

Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative School District

**Karen Soule, Superintendent of Schools
Director of Special Education**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Lin-Wood Public School's IDEA Steering Committee has teamed with SERESC (Southeastern Regional Education Service Center, Inc.) to take part in the New Hampshire Department of Education's Monitoring and Improvement Process. The goal is to establish a collaborative process through which the Department of Education and local districts work together in a cooperative spirit to achieve better results for students.

In addition to providing the Department with information on Lin-Wood Public School's compliance with state and federal standards, it is hoped that the monitoring process will result in a better understanding of the services and programs delivered by Lin-Wood, as well as the problems or barriers they may experience. This model involves exploring strengths and weaknesses to answer the focus question below. An improvement plan is then developed in response to the new information. Monitoring is no longer an activity to complete, but is a process that supports learning and the ongoing improvement and accountability of programs and services.

At the September 12th meeting the steering committee established a primary question that served to focus their efforts and guided them through the SPEDMIP process: "DO INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN THE LIN-WOOD EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY PROVIDE APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS?"

Using this question the committee's task was to gather program, student, and constituent data to determine strengths and weaknesses regarding instructional practices involving special and regular education programs at Lin-Wood.

Throughout the year sub-committees met to gather and analyze data from sources such as case studies, parent surveys, teacher surveys and interviews, and student interviews. These were used to provide program data that assisted in answering the focus question (see Appendix A for meeting dates).

The SPEDMIP has complemented and worked in concert with the following current school initiatives:

- Professional Development Policy (See Appendix B): One of the outlined goals of professional development at Lin-Wood is to “implement an ongoing, comprehensive system of reviewing student performance and the impact of instructional strategies on student learning.”
- District Improvement Plan (See Appendix C): Goals #2 and #4 involve addressing academic failure and instructional practices through a Curriculum Advisory Council and Staff Development Advisory Council.
- Best Schools Initiative (See Appendix D): BSI has focused on student assessment with a focus on multiple-modality assessment to measure student success in relation to their goals.

II. TEAM ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The SPEDMIP team was formed in Spring 2000 and has included regular and special education teachers, the school psychologist, administrators, guidance counselors, paraprofessionals, parents and students who volunteer their time and energy for the improvement of the district's special education services. The collaboration and cohesion of this group, both as a whole and in subcommittees, was profound and an invaluable part of our monitoring and improvement process. Their commitment over the course of approximately 17 meetings throughout the year demonstrates a tremendous dedication to our school's development and our students' success.



The IDEA Steering Committee members and sub-committee involvement are provided below:

Helene Anzalone	H.S. Special Education Teacher (compliance)
Jane Bergeron	SERESC Representative
Yvette Bujeaud	Elementary Aide (surveys)
Kathy Cook	Parent (surveys)
Dr. Andrew Connery	School Psychologist (compliance)
Diane Daniels	Middle School Teacher (surveys)
Todd Dimick	Facilitator – Guidance Counselor (final report)
Allison Havlock	Student (interviews)
Barbara Hooker	Elementary Teacher (case studies)
Paula King	Pre-School/Elementary Special Education (surveys)
Joanne Magnan	Middle School Special Education (case studies)
Dawn Mendes	Elementary Special Education (interviews)
Bob Nelson	Principal (interviews)
Paul Rand	School Board (interviews)
Brenda Seiferth	Elementary Guidance/Health Teacher (case studies)
Karen Soule	Superintendent (compliance)
David Webster	High School Teacher (case studies)

III. COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Lincoln and Woodstock, New Hampshire, are located at the entrance to Franconia Notch State Park and the termination point of the Kancamagus Highway at Interstate 93 and U.S.

3. The economy is heavily based on tourism, with the majority of jobs in the service industry. The three largest employers are Loon Mountain Recreation Corporation, the Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative School District, and an electrical connector manufacturing firm.

School Administrative Unit #68 is a single district SAU serving the adjoining communities of Lincoln (1400 residents) and Woodstock (1200 residents). Two buildings house the district's K-12 program on a single campus located on Lincoln's Main Street. Currently, there are 172 students enrolled in the Lin-Wood Elementary School, 89 in the Middle School, and 114 in the high school. Despite the fluctuations in economy and tourism over the last ten years, the school enrollment remains relatively constant.

Lin-Wood Public School prides itself on meeting the needs of all learners, whatever their special needs and strengths, by providing a full range of individualized programs that include planned inclusion, pull-out for specific classes, self-contained settings, and enhanced behavioral support, the vast majority of disabled students remaining in their local school community.

IV. DATA SOURCES

A. INTERVIEWS

<p>The interview committee followed a process that focused on thirty (30) people's perceptions of Lin-Wood's Special Education Program and Services and how they pertained to the focus question regarding the effectiveness of instructional practices in providing appropriate and effective learning opportunities for special education students. The process helped uncover how programs and services relate to student success and provided an opportunity for teachers, administrators, parents and other constituents to contribute their ideas for improving programs and services. Approximately five core questions (see Appendices E-G), which were generated by the sub-committee, ranged from topics such as transitions to whether or not Lin-Wood's inclusion model is successful, were asked of the following groups and generated the following comments regarding strengths and weaknesses of Lin-Wood's Special Education Program:</p>		
Teachers/para professionals	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication between regular and special education • Administrative support • Study Skills program • Career English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low parent involvement • Fitting IEP to curriculum • Time available – parent/staff • Training • Low pay for paraprofessional • SPED software • Need more staff • Transitions at all levels • Students' ability to work independently
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career English • Good staff support • Inclusion • Staff coordination • Safe school • Study Skills program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of computer lab after school • Work based classes • Test formats (modifications) • More technical assistance
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel a member of a team • Good communication • After school program • Study skills program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low student self-image • Improve modifications • Life skills • Coordination of transitions • More vocation education programs

Feedback from all groups interviewed generated the following common topics:

- Study skills
- Communication
- Transitions
- Vocational Education
- Inclusion issues
- Staffing and training
- IEP modification implementation

B. SURVEYS

<p>Similar to the interview process, surveys focused on various people's perceptions of special education programs and services. The survey sub-committee distributed SPEDMIP-generated surveys to all parents of special needs children by mail (see Appendix H), and to all faculty and support staff (see Appendix I) in the Lincoln-Woodstock Cooperative School District, providing opportunities for individuals to anonymously contribute their ideas for improving and/or evaluating programs and services for special education students and their families. A total of 27 faculty/staff surveys and 17 parent surveys were returned, representing approximately 33% of the total surveys distributed. Given the sample size, this in itself indicates a lack of parent feedback that has been supported by the other data sources. The strengths and weaknesses generated by each surveyed group are presented as follows:</p>		
Parents	Strengths	Weaknesses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with student program/IEP • Progress updates • Communication about special education process • Regular and special education teachers committed to individual student success • Adequate communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with regard to student progress (older elementary) • Issues surrounding staff expectations for child
Faculty/ Support Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelmingly, faculty and support staff in general were positive in their assessment of the special education process and of the programs offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of qualified support personnel to assist regular and special education • Inadequate provisions in the regular education curriculum for adapting materials and instruction to meet the needs of special education students • Limited instructional materials and equipment to carry out learning objectives with special education students • Limited knowledge of how to work effectively with special education students

C. CASE STUDIES

In contrast to survey and interview data, case studies allow a program to consider evidence about students as they progress through the special education process. This longitudinal study of files including report cards, IEPs, disciplinary measures, attendance, health records, and extracurricular activities provided the committee with a close look at the human side of Lin-Wood's special education program from the point of view of the people it purports to serve -- the students (See Appendix J). From the files, the following information was noted:		
	Strengths	Weaknesses
K-5 Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students receive multiple services from district IEPs met prescribed needs as determined by evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speech therapy affected by no full-time therapist Not enough information from outside evaluative sources
6-8 Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students began to self-advocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives are in place, but student goals are not being met Personal updates needed for one case study Different modifications needed
9-12 Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success shown in elective/non-academic classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In academic areas not stated in plans students received Ds or Fs

Feedback from all groups interviewed generated the following common topics:

- Consistently designed IEPs across grade level
- A direct positive correlation between family support and student success

D. COMPLIANCE REVIEW

V. PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Over the course of the monitoring and improvement process, patterns and trends evolved across data sources and are presented below according to who the pattern or trend effected the most, although many were reported across respondent groupings:

Areas of Strength

Parents	Parents feel they are adequately informed about their child's program and progress
	Parents feel they are an integral part of the IEP process
	Parents feel that communication between home and school is adequate
	Parents and staff are positive about efforts to include all students in regular education activities
	There is a wide range of services available to special needs students
Staff	Staff feel they are an integral part of the IEP process
	Staff are positive about inclusion efforts for regular education activities
	Staff are positive about the administrative support they receive
	Communication between regular and special education staff is effective
	Staff have positive expectations for students with special needs
	IEPs are written consistent with the needs identified through the evaluation process
	Staff have developed different ways for students to demonstrate what they know
	Students feel supported by staff
Students	Students feel safe in school
	Students' specific goals are generally met
	Students develop an ability to self-advocate as they move through the special education process
	There is above average success in non-academic areas
	Programs such as Study Skills, Career English, and the After School program are important components to the educational and support options available to students

Areas of Need

Parents	Minimal parent feedback
Staff	Paraprofessional issues (training, scheduling, educational level, salary, etc.)
	Lack of instructional materials available to help them include students with special needs
	Student data are scattered in various locations
	IEPs not closely related to curriculum standards
	IEPs not focused enough on life skills
Students	Low self-image
	Limited success is noted in areas not targeted by IEPs
	Transitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre-school to kindergarten • elementary to middle school • middle school to high school • high school to college
	Concern regarding more vocational and work-based options
	Concern that students demonstrate limited academic independence

2001 Lin-Wood Public School SPEDMIP Improvement Plan

Goal # 1	Person responsible	Timeline
<p>To design and develop a plan that will address the professional development needs of paraprofessionals as outlined in the SPEDMIP report. Areas identified include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Faculty roles regarding responsibilities of paraprofessionals ➤ Specific academic content training for paraprofessionals ➤ All other areas identified by existing Special Education team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Administration ➤ Professional Development Committee ➤ Special Education Team ➤ Regular and Special Education Faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Year 1. – Create and put design in place ➤ Year 2. – Implement the plan ➤ Year 3. – Assess and revise ➤ Year 4. – Assess the effectiveness of the training
Goal # 2	Person responsible	Timeline
<p>To develop more effective use of the special education process in order to facilitate collaboration between regular and special educators. Areas identified include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Special Education Process ➤ IEP Development with improved involvement from regular educators ➤ IEP implementation ➤ Transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Focus groups led by an independent facilitator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Year 1. – Establish format for process to facilitate collaboration ➤ Year 2. – Implement planned format ➤ Year 3. – Assess the effectiveness of the plan
Goal # 3	Person responsible	Timeline
<p>To align IEP goals and objectives with state and district curriculum standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Administration ➤ Regular and Special Education Faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Year 1. – Establish format ➤ Year 2. – Begin to research specific IEPs in relation to curriculum standards ➤ Year 3. – Make decisions on how students will best meet the standards ➤ Year 4. – Implement changes to IEPs ➤ Year 5. – Assess effectiveness of changes